(c) Sorting machine having a capacity for sorting about 30,000 letters per hour, can be justified only in offices having about 5 lakhs machinable mail for sorting per day.

None of the Head Post Offices in the country presently justifies use of such machine.

(d) There is no proposal to install sorting machines in Bihar state durng the year 1996-97 and 1997-98.

Waiting List of Telephones in Kerala

1179. SHRI SURESH PACHOURI: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the pendency of waiting list of telephone connections is the highest in the State of Kerala;

(b) if so, the reasons for the higher pendency and the action Government plan to take to give telephone connections to the applicants at least in a phased manner; and

(c) the State-wise break-up of telephone applications in the waiting list as on 31st December, 1996 in different categories?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The reasons for higher pendency are: (i) the growth rate for telephone demand has increased from 11.98% in 1993-94 to 15.3% in 1994-95 and then to 26.6% in 1996-97 and now, for the last ten months (April' 96 to Jan' 97) the growth rate has increased to about 30%.

(ii) Non availability of suitable land, rented buildings, delay in getting power supply, low voltage where power supply is available etc. are also constraints for faster provisioning of telephone connections.

The present waiting list as on 31.1.97 is 6.3 lakhs. The resource allocation and availability of other infrastructure are being stepped up during Ninth Five Year Plan to clear the present waiting list in a phased manner by the year 2000.

(c) The details of telephone applications in the waiting list as on 31.12.96 are as per Statement below.

Statement

State-wise break-up of telephone applications in the Waiting list as on 31.12.1996.

Sl. No.	Name of State	OYT	N-OYT
1.	Andhra Pradesh	477	2,25,841
2.	Assam	372	28,335
3.	Bihar	81	59,984
4.	Gujarat (including Dadar, Diu, Daman & Nagar Haveli)	3,034	2,87,767
5.	Haryana	361	1,01,334
6.	Himachal Pradesh	6	44,710
7.	Jammu & Kashmir	867	30,347
8.	Karnataka	2,292	2,20,952
9.	Kerala (including Lakshadweep (UT))	31,250	5,88,927
10.	Madhya Pradesh	71	67,899
11.	Maharashtra (including Goa and Mumbai)	2,708	3,72,561
12.	North-East (including Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland & Tripura)	32	16,740

Sl. No.	Name of State	OYT	N-OYT
13.	Orissa	36	22,543
14.	Punjab (including Chandigarh)	1,356	2,29,248
15.	Rajasthan	1,426	1,89,252
16.	Tamil Nadu (including Chennai & Pondicherry (UT))	9,543	4,43,888
17.	Uttar Pradesh	513	1,83,219
18.	West Bengal (including Sikkim, Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Calcutta)	372	1,56,533
19.	Delhi	37	56,827

Delay for Releasing the Telephone Connections in Maharashtra

1180. DR. SHRIKANT RAMCHANDRA JICHKAR: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that the Maharashtra telecom circle makes inordinate delay in releasing the telephone connections recommended by the Members of Parliament from their Quota;

(b) if so, the reason for such delay; and

(c) the steps taken by Government to expedite such delay?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA): (a) No Sir, Sanctions are issued expeditiously after following Departmental guidelines on the matter. However during last year some cases did get delayed owing to destruction of most of the office records in a major fire accident in Circle HQ, Mumbai.

(b) In a major fire accident on 13.5.96, most of the office records of Circle Office were destroyed. This included records about utilisation of out-of-turn quota by respective MPs of the Xth Lok Sabha & Rajya Sabha. Some letters of recommendation by MPs' and some sanctions prepared for despatch were also destroyed.

Most of the lost records were reconstructed by getting information from field units of MH Circle & also from other Circles. When some information was found missing inspite of above efforts, Hon'ble MPs were requested to furnish information from their own records.

Issue of sanctions pertaining to XIth Lok Sabha (which was formed after May' 96) has been smooth.

However, some cases pertaining to MP's of Xth Lok Sabha and also of Rajya Sabha got delayed owing to the process of reconstruction of records explained above.

(c) As stated in part (b) dislocation during 1996 was on account of fire accident. Otherwise the procedure for issue of sanctions is streamlined and new sanctions for the current year are being issued without any delay.

Target for Providing Telephone Connections

1181. SHRI VED PRAKASH P. GOYAL: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government were far behind the target of providing telephone connections during the last year and the situation is no better during the current year;

(b) if so, the targets fixed for the last year and the current year.